

But, it wasn't until 1996 that I started writing my personal zine, *Thought Bombs*, which I've now written sixteen of. I've written several other sort of theme zines on racism and the prisons for conferences or presentations I gave, plus tons of essays. I've contributed and edited many, many zines and have worked with some very good writers, most of whom are prisoners. I've put together catalogs describing each zine in detail, put up a website and make a point to make all my zines free to prisoners. It's a very expensive, work-intensive, stressful as hell project!

I've done all this with next to no help from anybody, zero grant money, several other activist projects, such as STAND (Shut This Airport Nightmare Down) amidst a very busy family life. For, I believe this system deserves nothing less than a full-blown commitment to rebellion! And this literary and activist project seems to be the best outlet for me, based on my abilities, circumstances and temperament. Plus, I see a crying need for this type of advocacy. It takes total concentration and dedication, but luckily I have motivation to burn and I don't have a lazy bone in my body.

I've broken my distro into four main categories 1) anarchism 2) feminism 3) anti-racism/abolitionism & 4) prisoner zines. I would say over 1/2 of them are prisoner zines.

Let me show you some of them from each category.

First and foremost is my own zine, *Thought Bombs*. These are wild collections of essays, rants, letters, poems, graphics and contact information. My son, Stanton, who is now twelve, draws all the cover art and usually a few pages inside each issue. My little guy, Stephen, who is six, has started to contribute his drawings, too.

I melt the personal in with the political in these. They sort of chronicle my life and thinking as an activist and as a husband and father.

Anthony Rayson

South Chicago ABC Zine Distro

Greetings, folks! First, I'd like to explain what this is all about. An ABC - **Anarchist Black Cross** - is an anarchist-fueled prisoner support group. The first one was started in Russia during the revolution of 1905 to support anarchist prisoners held captive in the Tsar's dungeons. ABC's dot the country and the world, mostly throughout Europe, America and Canada. We also work in solidarity with non-anarchist political prisoners, politicized prisoners and social prisoners. Personally, I think all prisoners are political because the class-based institution of incarceration is political. It's the punishment industry of U. S. - headquartered capitalism.

Zines are self-published works without bar codes, slick covers, which aren't beholden to advertisers, mainstream publishers or distributors - the *real* zines! They are not subject to censorship of any kind, which is why the gulag mailroom censor trolls hate them so much! They are usually free or very cheap. They are what the samizdat press was to the Soviet Union, for the people of the extreme capitalism of the West, only much more so. They are a vital link of information about what is really going on in this world that the mainstream totally ignores. There are thousands and thousands of zines on any subject imaginable. But the best ones, in my opinion, are very political and revolutionary. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* and Henry David Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* were the zines of their day.

A distro provides zines to people who want them, mostly through the mail, but also online. I deal in paper zines exclusively. Not everyone has computer access, in fact very few really do and almost zero prisoners do! You can't read an e-zine on the bus or at work! Here's a zine that lists hundreds of zine distributors throughout the world.*

My distro, South Chicago ABC Zine Distro now has about 225 different zines available and I'm adding new ones all the time. These are pointedly political, many of which I write myself, edit or otherwise contribute to. I sort of specialize in helping articulate prisoners conceive, format, edit, publish and distribute their work into zine form.

Now. Why do I do this? Well, like the Beatles once said, "The world is a bad place, a bad place, a terrible place to live." For many many hundreds of millions of people this is absolutely true, in the immediate physical sense. For everybody else, it's terrible because we are being forced into a truncated, sinisterly motivated reality, whether it is anywhere near fully understood by us or not.

Once I was able to overcome my own self-hatred and fear of Big Brother to a certain degree, I felt it was my responsibility as a citizen of this Earth to give forth my testimony, as I've made it a point to be extremely observant to political reality all during my lifetime. I was very fortunate to have a very conscious, political upbringing. Hopefully, as my writing and editing improves, these efforts will increasingly educate, motivate, empower and inspire people to attempt to attain their own self-realization and work for social justice.

Another practical reason to launch this distro is that prisons insist literature must be sent from the publisher for prisoners to receive them, so I became the publisher myself. And, I make it a point to provide literature by and for prisoners that they want, can use and share with their cohorts. Also, I was not satisfied with the level of rebellion being voiced by others and felt I could do better, because I also want to read something seriously powerful and well written, even if I must write it, myself! I never claimed to be a self-deprecating say nothing! I feel what I have to say is of extreme importance.

Permit me to recite a couple of quotes about this society of ours.

hundreds of these human warehouses all over this country!

What an affront to life and living creatures! There is more *dire* U.S - orchestrated evil in this world, such as the massive infanticide being unleashed on the children of Iraq, for example. But as far as complex, systematized, daily, massive, governmental criminality, the U.S. gulag system is right up there.

This is a class-based punishment industry, where everything evil about the system - racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, torture, isolation, medical neglect and experimentation, forced obedience to fascist bureaucracy, ritual murder and all-around-injustice, predation and corruption, etc. etc. is magnified, yet hidden from the public eye.

That is why I concentrate on getting the word out of there, because you're sure as hell not going to read about it in the mainstream rags. The government wants this information suppressed and every prison censors all incoming and some outgoing mail and often denies my publications entry, ala Hitler's Germany. Freedom of the press is a big fat lie! The U.S. Nazis make Hitler look like a Vienna choirboy!

But, my distro isn't just about the prisons. I started writing about growing up in the racist south Chicago suburbs, the Vietnam War, the sexual suppression and sexism, the "generation gap," music, the Civil Rights Movement - all kinds of things. I wrote my first zine, *Peoples' Polar Express* in 1974, after dropping out of college and hitchhiking around the country for a couple of years, in the wake of Nixon's second not-too-secret invasion of Cambodia, when all the colleges and universities went out on strike. I just stayed on strike!

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And the sad sacks watchin' this stuff, lead virtual lives of voyeurism because their real lives are atomized, compartmentalized daily treks of lifelong agony, where truth, beauty, honesty and hope are all a sick mockery. It's where people settle for one or usually more various addictions, such as gambling, porno, drugs, food, the idiot box, compulsive criminality or whatever, in a vain attempt to avoid dealing with the brutal realities of this world and their lives.

To some people, that is just not good enough, but rather thoroughly and totally revolting! Boy, "some people!" eh?

What are some of our other wonderful institutions? How about our military, which degrades and humiliates recruits into blind obedience. The School of Assassins teaches foreign thugs the fine art of torture and murder of the citizens to keep their rich comfortable and U.S. corporations dominant. The massive, deadly U. S. hardware threatens the whole planet with any minute annihilation! A lot of these military men who've gone overseas and committed sanctioned by the U.S. government - murder! - in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, El Salvador, Africa, Asia, South America, etc. come home and get jobs on police forces, corporations and prisons where they can get paid further for their institutional sadism. They're our "heroes!"

The tax man takes 1/3 of what's left of a paycheck, after the employers have taken their do-nothing rip-off cut. The police selectively enforce the rich-lawyer written laws. The cesspool of the political system, the welfare agencies who snatch the children of those kidnapped for incarceration, the housing "authorities" with their corrupt, rathole vertical prisons... all are very vile and cosmically and morally most unacceptable.

But the worst of all the systems - at least domestically - is the judicial system, with its unsavory, although *human-like* lawyers, judges, prosecutors and prisonkrats and the massive system of decades-long caging and brutalization of human beings. There are

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"What is the existence of the average man today? Almost all your time is given to earning your livelihood. You are so busy making a living that you hardly have time left to live, to enjoy life. Neither the time nor the money. You are lucky if you have some source of support, some job. Now and then comes slacktime: there is unemployment and thousands are thrown out of work, every year, in every country.

That means no income, no wages. It results in worry and privation, in disease, desperation and suicide. It spells poverty and crime. To alleviate that poverty we build homes of charity, poorhouses, free hospitals, all of which you support with your taxes. To prevent crime and to punish criminals it is again you who have to support police, detectives, State forces, judges, lawyers, prison keepers. Can you imagine anything more senseless and impractical? The legislatures pass laws, the judges interpret them, the various officials execute them, the police track and arrest the criminal, and finally the prison warden gets him into custody. Numerous persons and institutions are busy keeping the jobless man from stealing and punish him if he tries to. Then he is provided with the means of existence, the lack of which has made him break the law in the first place...

Crime is the result of economic conditions, of social inequality, of wrongs and evils of which government and monopoly are the parents. Government and law can only punish the criminal. They neither cure nor prevent crime. The only real cure for crime is to abolish its causes, and this the government can never do because it is there to preserve those very causes."

That as you probably recognize, is Alexander Berkman. See if you can guess who said this.

"Government is not reason, it is not eloquence - it is force."

Johann Most or Enrico Malatesta perhaps? Try George Washington!

Let's take a quick look around us at what is happening today. We've got two million prisoners in this country, many hundreds of thousands of which are in prison for possession of pot! The incarceration industry - the punishment industry - is a wildly profitable multi-headed hydra of profit-taking. It's raw capitalism whose product is human misery! Each inmate has a price tag on him or her, which explains why parole is no longer an option. It's modern day slavery, pure and simple!

Our lives are controlled by coercive institutions, so seamlessly and completely that many don't even question or know it and if they do, think they are better off because of it - even people already in prison! Most people enjoy the comforts of their cage.

You have the miserable schools that teach kids how futile it is to think for themselves. All they feel comfortable caring about is the clothes and games they think they want! Reality is too frightening to deal with. Thankfully, growing numbers of them are beginning to realize that if they don't fight for their lives, they won't have one! As they get older, they must enter the seething workplaces with the danger, alienation, pollution and wage-slave subsistence. It's not a life but a lived death!

On Sunday, you go to the churches to get a dose of shame and pious patriarchal pie-in-the-sky nonsense! I'm no Christian, but even Jesus Christ was a tortured, wrongly accused, deathrow inmate who was killed for his beliefs by the dominant government of his day. Rome then, The U.S. today!

We do have our false culture based on buying, the malls, the endless cars and trucks, the canned scripted and laughed at shows, the violence glorying movies with all their phony sex. The mainstream media are basically forums for advertisers and think tank churned out pundit apologists for corporations, shameless, mainstream political wonks! They offer *nothing* new! The "news" is unanalyzed, superficial daily factoids!

Then there's the nauseous corporate farms with their gene-altered Frankenfoods and the profit-making horrors reserved for the animals who are bred in excruciating confinement, only to be murdered and butchered, stripped of their pelts and packaged to be eaten. But you can go to jail for "cruelty to animals!" Justice and morality worship at the altar of profit.

The drug industry is another abomination, causing the deaths by experimentation of millions of animals to keep people zombified and "functional" in this sick society, with a hideous assortment of psychotropic drugs. Two million children are on Ritalin - speed - to "calm" them! Some whose behavior is being controlled are as young as six months!! Yet you can go to prison for decades for smoking a joint! The Soviet Nurse Ratchet's had nothing on us! Who are the brain police???

The world itself is dying! Even mainstream ecologists give us what? Twenty years? You could drive a trillion Mack Trucks through the ozone hole! Earthquakes, famine, mudslides, forest fires, genocide, tidal waves, nuclear waste, global warming, species extinctions, the choking off of our lungs - the rain forests - and all the other forests... the plutoniumization of space - are all slowly accelerating! We can't just up and leave and move to Mars or the Moon because people are fragile and delicate and will die anywhere except a healthy Earth! Ah, but who cares? I've got tickets to a ballgame and those kids out in the streets deserve to be clubbed like baby harp seals by the Darth Vader goon squads for bringing up such unpleasantries! Right? How dare those "rioters" clamor for a future than celebrates and includes life!

You know society is like a porno flick. You've got these hot babes ever eager to perform sex acts on men. What they don't show you is the fact that the whole thing is a degrading profit-making mafioso meat market, and the women came or were hustled up as lonely 18 year olds, overwhelmingly victims of lifelong sexual abuse!